

*Teacher Version*

## *Briefing Memo XI, The Later Cold War (1961-1987)*

America's new, young President, John F. Kennedy brought a sense of excitement and progress to his foreign policy, whether it was rebuilding battered alliances [*The Alliance for Progress*] or envisioning an American future in space. [*The Goal of Sending a Man to the Moon*] But in reality, he followed the Cold War containment policies of his predecessors, and learned a harsh lesson during a failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. [*The Lesson of Cuba*] In 1962, Kennedy faced the most dangerous situation thus far in the conflict with the USSR when evidence surfaced of new Soviet missile bases in Cuba [*Unmistakable Evidence: The Arms Build-up in Cuba*]; bases that would give the Soviets the ability to send nuclear weapons deep into the heart of the United States. Kennedy stood firm—risking nuclear war—and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev backed down. The Soviet Union continued on the offensive in Berlin, erecting a wall through the divided city and eventually completely separating East and West Germany. Although the wall remained, Kennedy turned it into something of a public relations triumph when he visited West Berlin and declared his solidarity with the German people. [*Ich bin ein Berliner*]

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, wanted to be known for his progressive vision of the future [*Outer Space Treaty, Agreement on the Rescue and Return of Astronauts*], but was remembered instead for the escalation of the war in Vietnam [*Tonkin Gulf Resolution*]. In 1967, a war broke out in the Middle East between Israel and its Arab neighbors, which would also have long-term consequences for the United States. The United States joined Great Britain in sponsoring a resolution in the UN

Security Council calling for “land for peace”—the return of captured Arab territory in return for recognition of the right of Israel to exist. *UN Security Council Resolution 242* is still the basis for America's diplomatic position in the area today.

The presidential election of 1968 brought former Vice President Richard Nixon to power. Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger believed the world had changed and that the United States could not carry all of its burdens. Nations that wanted American aid would have to participate actively in their own defense. [*The Nixon Doctrine*] They also believed that the United States could gain some advantage by playing the two major communist powers—the USSR and China—against each other. They successfully negotiated important nuclear arms control measures with the Soviet Union [*Agreement on Measures to Reduce the Risk of Nuclear War*] and dramatically changed U.S. foreign policy by initiating contact with the People's Republic of China. [*Secret Diplomacy in China, Joint Communiqué of the United States and the Peoples' Republic of China*]

But the secrecy that brought President Nixon success also brought about his downfall and Congress advanced its own agenda focused on a human rights issue, the emigration of Jews, with the Soviet Union. [*The Jackson–Vanik Amendment*] The administration of his successor, President Gerald Ford, had some success on the diplomatic front [*Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling*

*of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)*], but was lesser successful in addressing a new and dangerous vulnerability of the United States: dependence on the oil resources of the volatile Middle East. [*Energy Independence by 1985*] Ford's successor, President Jimmy Carter also tried—unsuccessfully—to address the same issue. [*The Greatest Challenge of our Lifetimes, A Crisis of Confidence*]

Although President Carter carried on the Cold War policies of his predecessors [*Joint Communiqué of the United States and the Peoples' Republic of China establishing Diplomatic Relations, Taiwan Relations Act*], he was committed to changing the direction of U.S. foreign policy by bringing back a moral and idealistic focus. [*A New American Foreign Policy Based on Human Rights, A Commitment to Fairness not Force*] He had some success in negotiating a peace treaty between the Egyptians and the Israelis [*The Camp David Accords*], but another problem in the same part of the world would torpedo his presidency.

Since the administrations of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, the United States looked to the friendly nations of Saudi Arabia and Iran to protect its interests in the oil-rich Middle East and had supplied them with almost unlimited arms. Unfortunately, especially in the case of Iran, the United States was silent on the corruption and abuses of Iran's leader, Shah Reza Pahlavi. In early 1979, a revolution replaced the Shah with an Islamic fundamentalist government under a religious leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini. When President Carter allowed the

Shah into the United States for medical treatment, student radicals seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held its diplomats hostage. [*A Diplomat in Captivity*] Although buoyed by the support of allies and the United Nations [*We are your Friends, UN Security Council Resolution #461 on Iran*], Carter was unable to negotiate the release of the hostages. The United States seemed helpless and Carter's conservative critics attacked his foreign policy for its ineffectiveness. [*Dictators and Double Standards*]

But Iran was not the last of Carter's Middle Eastern problems. In January 1980, the Soviet Union invaded the state of Afghanistan, and the United States sent covert aid

to the Islamic rebels who were resisting. The President warned against the danger to the oil fields of the Middle East [*The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*] and announced the *Carter Doctrine*, which said that the United States considered the Persian Gulf vital to its national security and would use force in its defense.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought to power a conservative known for his unrelenting opposition to communism and his contempt for the malaise of the Carter years. Reagan went on the attack [*The Evil Empire, Tear Down that Wall*], but met his Soviet counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev at four high level summits that eased relations between

the two superpowers—and prepared the way for the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

But as the Cold War petered out, new—and very different—global challenges emerged. A frightening illness began to kill people all around the world [*First Reports of HIV-AIDS*] and scientists warned of what appeared to be a grave threat to the environment [*Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer*] and called on world leaders to join together for immediate action. ■